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23 February 1968

MEMORANDUM FOR: D/PPB

SUBJECT: Comment on NSAM #368

1. Several approaches to the proposal exist and I think each of these should be explored internally and with an appropriate interagency forum.

2. This proposal may in fact be the White House Staff effort to make formal what has heretofore been an under the table exchange to reactions to the PFIAB proposals arising from the Guidance and Evaluation Panel exercise. Thus, I believe that the DCI would be completely warranted in calling Rostow to clarify this point; indeed, I believe that this should have been done as soon as the document was received. If we believe that a considerable effort is required to develop a program in this area, I think we should incorporate the original DCI reaction to the instant proposal in a formal letter along with a realistic estimate of the time required to do the job the Community wants to undertake, send it to Rostow and tell him that this constitutes the DCI's response to NSAM 368.

3. CIA and each of the participating Agencies have long range plans and programs for information processing. One point of departure would be to bring these programs together and analyze them as a concerted attack on the information processing problem. We might identify those programs from which we expect to get clues as to how to proceed on additional programs and when such information ought to be forthcoming. This process should be accompanied or followed by an urgent effort to identify gaps in this system and provide additional projects to fill out the program. A report embodying these findings and proposals could be made ready for Rostow by the end of May if each Agency gave it priority attention.

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4. I think that there must be a careful brief prepared which seeks to analyze the nature of any information processing and analysis program. This brief must set out the fundamentally different concepts of information analysis which exist and relate them to the PFIAB concept which is the only one presented in this exercise but is certainly not the only one in existence.

5. CIA internally must rationalize its approach to the problem of information processing and analysis. The Agency has traditionally placed its information storage and retrieval systems under the management of the production and collection organizations of the Agency although it has created a Support Directorate to manage the other common functions which are furnished these components. Indeed, some of the information processing functions of the Agency are now performed by the Support Directorate, for example, communications and the cable secretariat functions.

6. There is much to be said for managing the information resources of any production activity within the activity itself. The organization is the consumer of the information; it knows what it wants in the way of information and how it wants such information. Although there are commonly wanted elements of information, the molecules and substance of information required tend to vary with every producing organization, even those engaged in production of ostensibly identical products. The folk wisdom that a single collection of information elements required by all producers in a single point to which all have access is the optimum information system is nowhere observed in practice and thus may be, like much folk wisdom, nonsense.

7. There are many information activities which tend to be duplicative and which could be performed commonly on some partial basis in any event. Some of these have been identified in studies such as SCIPS which generated much of the folk wisdom we are now faced with in this NSAM and its supporting documents. Many of these in turn have been partially performed by constituents of the Community as a service of common concern. The results have too often been appalling however. These activities tend to become monsters such as NSA or NPIC or to wither away into obscurity such as factory markings or intellofax. Both compound the information problem, the monsters because they generate additional demands in excess of those they ostensibly satisfy, the latter because they provide a maintenance problem for fear there may be something contained therein which will be of value sometime.

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8. The Directorate of Intelligence has recently sought to reduce expenditure on support activities performed for other agencies where the agency requesting the service or a third agency has the basic community responsibility for the data required. The agencies requesting service allege that they must receive service here to assure that they have decent coverage of the subject being searched. Moreover, they must pass through a control point in DIA (for the military services) or in their own requirements shop before they may approach CIA. Circumstances such as these give CIA little confidence in a central file system which allocates responsibility for various files among these agencies. This matter is made additionally difficult by our findings when we are finally persuaded to undertake basic research into matters which are the responsibility of other agencies. We discover that there is often a great deal of data but that it is poorly organized, series are constantly changed with no notion of how they relate and that much of the data is of marginal relevance. Often a new collection or processing effort is required to get the data required for a satisfactory research job.

9. I believe that any community response on this issue ought to include a direct confrontation on the nature of the community's information requirements and the manner in which it seeks to satisfy these.



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